



# *Milwaukee County*

## Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic, 4<sup>th</sup> District



For Immediate Release October 26, 2011  
Contact: Harold Mester, Public Information Manager  
414/278-4051 or harold.mester@milwcnty.com

### **SUPERVISOR DIMITRIJEVIC INTRODUCES WELLNESS PLAN AIMED AT REDUCING EMPLOYEE HEALTH CARE COSTS**

*Proposal based on successful public and private sector models*

**Milwaukee, WI** – Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic will introduce an employee wellness plan called S.T.E.P. Up (Stronger Team through Employee Participation) aimed at encouraging employees to pursue healthier lifestyle choices while lowering health care costs. The plan will be presented to the Finance & Audit Committee as an amendment to the 2012 Budget. Similar initiatives are already used by local public and private sector employers, including the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Schools, Northwestern Mutual and Quad/Graphics.

“Under my STEP Up model, a small investment now can pay large dividends in the future. Considering the budget challenges we face this year, the time is now to reverse the trend of rising health care costs. This will be a team effort,” Supervisor Dimitrijevic said. “The City of Milwaukee has achieved a 90% participation rate in their wellness program. We hope to achieve similar participation in Milwaukee County.”

In the typical wellness structure, employees participate in an annual screening and develop a plan to help them stay or get healthy. For example, depending on which risks are identified, participants could be referred to a smoking cessation program, be given a diet/exercise program, or be advised to see a doctor.

Health care costs are driven by a handful of diseases — including hypertension, diabetes and heart disease — that can be managed or prevented. But the required lifestyle adjustments are easy to put off, especially if the problem isn't detected.

“Wellness programs give employees an enhanced opportunity to take control of their future,” Supervisor Dimitrijevic added. “I am confident that, when given a chance, Milwaukee County employees will STEP Up to the challenge.”

According to the American Journal of Health Promotion, every \$1 invested in wellness results in \$3.50 in savings through lower health care costs. The Journal found that absenteeism from illness decreases by 27%, health care costs fall 26% and workers comp and disability claims decrease by 32%.

###